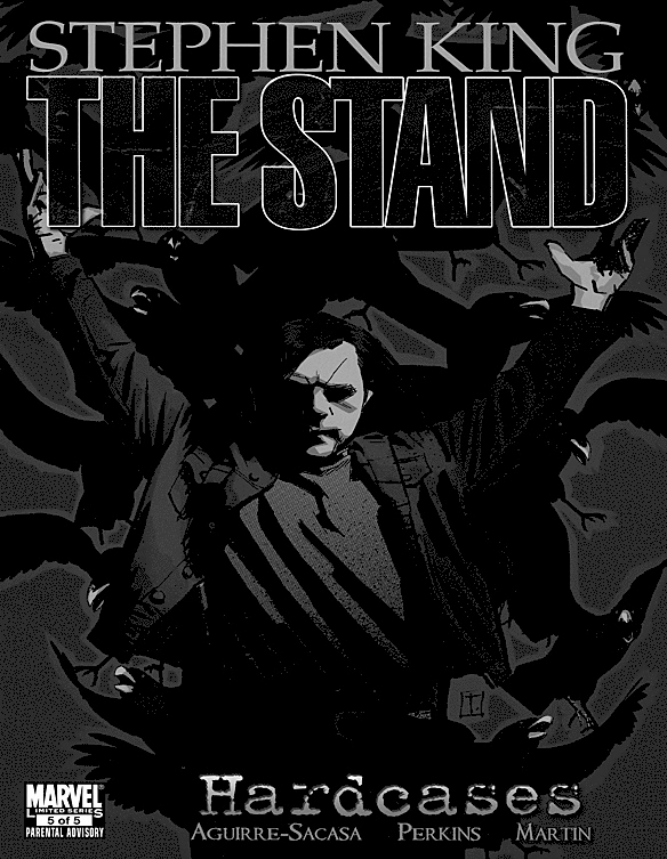


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STEPHEN KING THE STAND



MARVEL
LIMITED SERIES
5 of 5
PARENTAL ADVISORY

Hardcases

AGUIRRE-SACASA

PERKINS

MARTIN

STEPHEN KING THE STAND

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PREVIOUSLY IN THE STAND

Two months ago, something happened at Project Blue in California. Within weeks, a flu-like virus—"Captain Trips"—swept through the world, killing off 99% of the population. Now, it's up to the survivors to piece together a new life in a world that has moved on.

Stu Redman and Glen Bateman have traveled together since meeting in New Hampshire, meeting Frannie Goldsmith and Harold Lautner along the way. But since Stu and Frannie fell in love, Harold has spiraled downward into a dark state that grows darker by the day. Everyone has grown wary of him—most of all Frannie, who discovered chocolate-smeared fingerprints in her diary that can only mean one thing: Harold knows her innermost thoughts about Stu—and worse, about him.

Plans are underway to begin to restore some order in Boulder. The ad hoc committee agrees that an encounter with the Dark Man—about whom they've all been dreaming—looms nearer, and they move to send spies to gather intelligence about the Dark Man's plans. But Mother Abigail senses that the danger is imminent, and without warning she leaves Boulder in the middle of the night. A task awaits her, one that only she can complete... and in her wake, she leaves a town full of people, leaderless.



By noon, news of Mother Abigail's disappearance--days before the Free Zone's first, all-important Town Hall Meeting--swept Boulder.

The community's collective sense was that she must've gone off to "pray for guidance." The general mood was more of unhappy resignation than alarm...

I must be gone a bit now. I've sinned and presumed to know the mind of God. My sin has been PRIDE, and HE wants me to find my place in His work again. I will be with you again if it is God's will. Abby Foreman

...except at the Power Plant, where efforts to get the juice flowing again were interrupted by Glen's arrival with Mother Abigail's note.

We can't let an old woman wander the frigging wilderness like some Old Testament guy until she dies of exposure!

Slow down, Stu. Let's try to look at the implications of this.

If the Pope decides he has to walk to Jerusalem, do you argue with him if you're a good Catholic?

To hell with the implications, Glen!

It's *not* the same thing and you know it!

It showers just about every afternoon... If she gets soaked, Mother's sure to take a cold. Then what? Pneumonia? At her age?

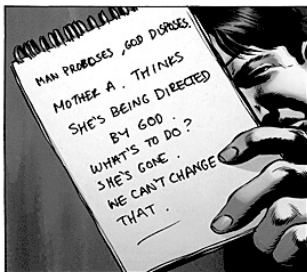
Ralph's right: we have to--

We have to pull together a search party--

How far could she have gotten?

EVEN IF YOU FOUND HER, HOW WOULD YOU BRING HER BACK? CHIRING?

Of course not! But we can't do nothing!



"...I'll just swing by home and leave a note for Fran."

She'd been at the library in downtown Boulder, reading up on gardening, when she heard about Mother Abigail taking her leave.

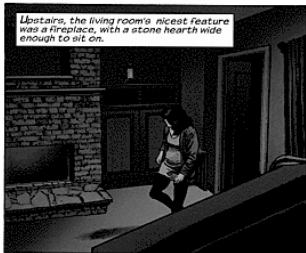
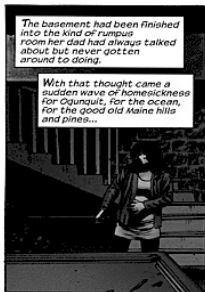
Fran went straight to the apartment, missing Stu and the others by a few minutes. His note was short:

Immediately, she worried. A man who would steal your diary (Harold!) and pilfer your thoughts might creep up behind someone he hated (Stu!) and give him a push off a high place. Or use a rock. Or a knife. Or a gun.

So Harold's house on Arapahoe might be deserted until nine-thirty tonight...

Three minutes later, biking up Broadway, Fran was wondering what she would do if she actually found something incriminating at Harold's...

The truth was, she had no idea.





**KNOCK,
KNOCK,
KNOCK.**



*My God, Fran thought, The
shades are down, at least.
And my bike is in the
backyard, out of sight--*



Hello?
Anyone
home?



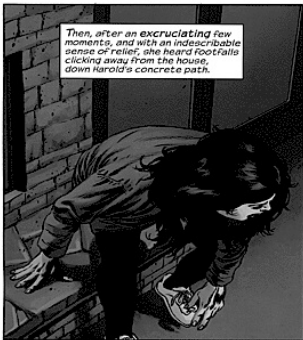
*The knob of the front door
began to turn in frustrated
half-circles...*



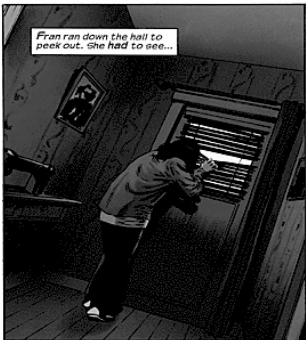
*She could summon
nothing to her mind
except gibberish:*

*Before removing the
mote from thy neighbor's
eye, remove the pie
from thine own...*

Then, after an excruciating few moments, and with an indescribable sense of relief, she heard footfalls clicking away from the house, down Harold's concrete path.



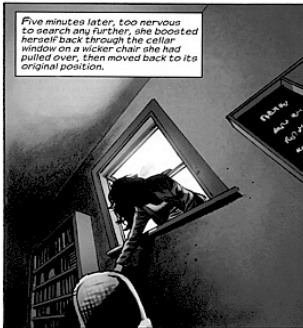
Fran ran down the hall to peek out. She had to see...



The Cross woman, the one who came over with Larry Underwood, she thought. Does she know Harold?



Five minutes later, too nervous to search any further, she boosted herself back through the cellar window on a wicker chair she had pulled over, then moved back to its original position.



Once home, she concluded, simply, that she was not one for housebreaking.

Oh, Stu, I need you...

Please come home...



LATER.

THE HUNT FOR MOTHER ABAGAIL

Harold had asked for Nederland because it was the least likely area to find anything.

He didn't think he could walk from Boulder to Nederland in one day, let alone that crazy old bag.

2... Sunrise Amphitheater... No sign of her... storm's coming up over here...!

Ralph was way up on Flagstaff Mountain, but Stu was in Chautauque Park, only about four miles from Harold.

Ten-four, Ralph, Harold, you there? Calling Harold Lauder. You copy, Harold?

I'm here. I was off to the side... Thought I saw something in a ditch, but it was just an old jacket, over.

Yeah, okay. Why don't you come down to Chautauque, Harold, and we'll wait for Ralph together, copy?

You like giving orders, don't you, suckhole? I might have something for you. Yes, I just might.

Sorry, Stu, I was woolgathering. I can be there in fifteen minutes. Over and out.



Harold took a moment. He felt he was at a point of balance...about to shift.

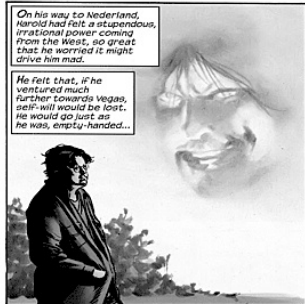
He was wearing an army surplus flak jacket for the mountain chill, but also because it hid the Smith & Wesson .38 in one of its zippered pockets.



He'd initiated this expedition on the chance that he might be alone with Stu long enough to actually do it...

Tonight?

Why not?



On his way to Nederland, Harold had felt a stupendous, irrational power coming from the West, so great that he worried it might drive him mad.

He felt that, if he ventured much further towards Vegas, self-will would be lost. He would go just as he was, empty-handed...



...and for that, although he could not be blamed, the dark man would kill him.



It was ten to seven, now. He could waste both Redman and Bretnier by 7:30; Fran wouldn't raise the alarm until 10:30; by then, he would be well on his way to Nevada...

Smiling, Harold Lauder drove towards Chautauqua Park.

DUSK.

Nothing, huh? Never mind, it was a good idea. For all we know, she's back at her house right now. If not, we can look again tomorrow, before the meeting.



Hopefully we won't be looking for a body.



Hopefully not...

Listen, Harold, why don't you come back to supper with me?



What?



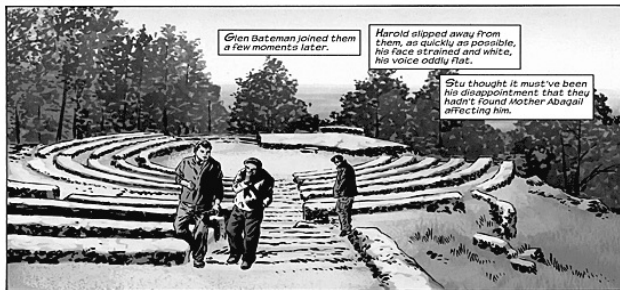
Supper.

Frannie'd be glad to see you, too. She really would.



...
I...





When he got home, Harold was on the verge of tears and shaking so bad he could barely get his key in the front door.

He wrote in his ledger for nearly an hour and a half, until it was all out of him--his terror and his fury and his frustration--and his resolve was strong again.



After putting his ledger away, Harold thought, calmly, how close he had come to mowing Stu down with his .38.

That would have put the other members of their sanctimonious ad hoc committee in a mood for their meeting.



But there would be other chances. After all, the mark of genius is its ability to abide. And so he would--

Harold Froze.



The basement door was standing open. He kept it closed tight, always.





In the basement, Harold saw something on the floor, beneath the windows.



A spill of brown grit. And in the grit, as clear as a fingerprint...

...the track of a sneaker or tennis shoe.



You'll pay...

Whichever one of you it was, you'll pay...



But Harold had an idea who it was...

He'd have to come up with a better hiding place for his ledger, he knew that. It was a dangerous book, and if someone found it, it was over.

He kept thinking of Fran's shoes... (Patterns of soles, patterns of souls...)

When Harold finally did sleep, he cried out miserably in his dreams, as if to ward off things that had already been let in forever.



**MEANWHILE.
STU AND FRAN'S.**

Where have you been? I was worried!

I was at the library...

How did Harold seem?

Pretty well racked. Sorry his idea didn't pan out better. You know, I really could get to like that sucker...

I invited him to supper; I hope that's okay by you.

Stu explained Harold's idea that they hunt for Mother Abigail to at least keep an eye on her.

We would've taken you along, kiddo, but you were nowhere to be found.

...

Yes. Yes. I'd like to be on good terms with Harold.

If Mother Abigail doesn't show up by tonight, I thought I'd ask Harold if he'd want to go out again with me.

I'd like to go, too. And there are a few others around here that aren't convinced she's being fed by the ravens. Pick Vollman's one. Larry Underwood's another...

THE NEXT DAY.

The search-party started out modestly with half-a-dozen folks, but by dusk, there were better than fifty people combing the brush west of Boulder.

The Free Zone's mood had shifted to dread. Despite the powerful dreams that accorded Mother Abigail a semidivine status, most people were still realists. The woman was well over a hundred years old, and she had been out a night all on her own...



...and now, a second night was coming on.

By dusk, a breeze from the mountains was throwing a splatter of rain against the windows of Fran and Stu's apartment. They were both feeling low and unhappy--

--when Glen burst in.

Stu--
Fran--

Oh, man,
I'm glad you're
here.

What's
wrong, Glen?
Is it...?

Did someone
find her?

No. It's
not bad news,
it's good
news.

But it's
strange...

You...you
better come
over to my
place.

GLEN'S HOUSE ON SPRUCE STREET



I came home from looking and he was on the porch, fast asleep...

He's really scrawny, and he's been fighting, but it's Kojak...



I'll be...

Say, that's a good boy. Good dog, Kojak.



He followed me... That's the kind of thing you read about in Star Weekly... Faithful Dog Follows Master Two Thousand Miles... How could he have gotten here?



Maybe...

Maybe the same way we did.



Are you saying--?

Dogs do dream, you know.

Is *that* what happened with you, boy?



...did *you* dream about Mother, too?

In fact, Kojak (who still thought of himself occasionally as Big Steve, which had been his original name) followed the scent of The Man all the way to Hemmingford Home...

...where four wolves came out of the corn like ragged spirits of the dead and set upon him.

The fight had been brutal.

(Indeed, even when Kojak was an old, old dog--and he would live another sixteen years, long after Glen Bateman died--the wounds he received in that battle would ache and throb on wet days.)

Kojak killed two of the wolves and sent the other two scurrying away...

...before crawling under the porch to hide from an unseen thing that felt like a Man and a Wolf and an Eye, a dark thing like an ancient crocodile in the corn...

Some unknown time later, Kojak emerged from beneath the porch, sure of where to go.

And it was not The Man's scent guiding him, it was a Dream to the west of him. Of him chasing rabbits through clover that was wet with soothing dew...

CHAUTAUQUA AUDITORIUM. THE FIRST FREE ZONE TOWN MEETING.

The turnout was almost total, and for the first time, Larry Underwood got an idea of how large the community was becoming in Boulder.



It all came down to this. Mother Abigail would've endorsed all seven members of the ad hoc committee in one fell swoop, but now, each one of them would have to be nominated and seconded separately.



Larry's hands were damp and chilly; in his heart, he heard his mother's voice: *There's something left out of you, Lar--*



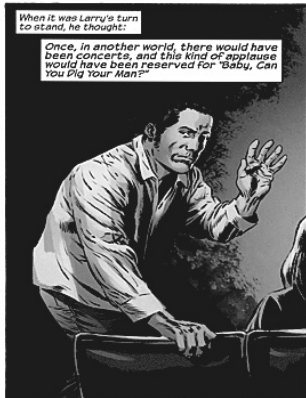
Stu began the meeting by introducing each member of the ad hoc committee--

--one by one.



When it was Larry's turn to stand, he thought:

Once, in another world, there would have been concerts, and this kind of applause would have been reserved for "Baby, Can You Dig Your Man?"



This wasn't on the agenda, but I wonder if we couldn't start by singing the National Anthem. I guess you Folks remember the words and the tune.



Fran's sweet voice sang the first three syllables--

Oh, say
can--

--and Larry was suddenly transported back, to upstate Vermont, to July 4th, when he awoke, unaware that Rita lay dead in a tent behind him.



Then other voices joined, including Lucy's, as she took his hand--

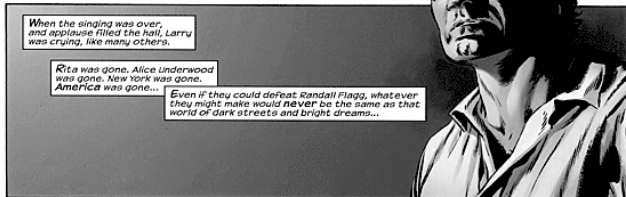
--and Larry was a boy, with his mother in Yankee Stadium...back when all things were still possible.



When the singing was over, and applause filled the hall, Larry was crying, like many others.

Rita was gone. Alice Underwood was gone. New York was gone. America was gone...

Even if they could defeat Randall Flagg, whatever they might make would never be the same as that world of dark streets and bright dreams...



The meeting continued.

Stu asked that the Free Zone citizens accept both the Constitution and the Bill of Rights as governing law. A voice in the back seconded the motion, so:

Those in favor say aye.

"Aye," to the rooftops.

They like to vote, thought Stu. Good.

Now we see if this is gonna go easy or hard.

The next item on the agenda reads, "To see if the Free Zone will nominate and elect a slate of seven Free Zone representatives."

That means--

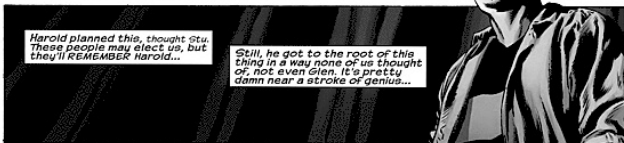
Mr. Chairman?
Mr. Chairman!

Harold Lauder...

Nick had blocked Harold from serving on the ad hoc committee... Was this his moment of revenge?

Was he about to accuse them of a railroad job? (Which, in a way, is what they were committing?)





Let's vote, then. Those in favor of Harold Lauder's motion that we accept the ad hoc committee just as it stands as the Permanent Free Zone Committee, please signify by saying aye.

"Aye," they bellowed, sending the barnswallows above them into a frenzy.

Opposed?"

There was not a single "nay" in the chamber...

...so Stu pushed on to the next item on the agenda, feeling slightly dazed.

As if someone--namely, Harold Lauder--had crept up behind him and clopped him on the head with a large sledgehammer made out of Silly Putty.

Stu wondered, suddenly, if he had been wrong about Harold turning over a new leaf. He worried, dimly, that this was the first move of a confidence game Harold was playing with them.

Well, they would find out soon enough.

THE STAND CONTINUES IN TWO MONTHS WITH NO MAN'S LAND #1

BOULDER DASH

Mike Perkins discusses his trip to Boulder, and drawing the city in *THE STAND*

I was always aware that *Hardcases* would be the “difficult” arc of our adaptation of Marvel’s *The Stand*. From my initial read-through of the unabridged novel I could tell that when the majority of our protagonists reached Boulder they would have to endure through the growing pains of re-introducing some kind of societal norms—this usually involves a lot of chatting! I also understood that this procedure is rudimentary and importantly

needed in moving things forward and establishing a reason to take... well... a Stand!

I’ve been extremely lucky in the respect that I’ve got Roberto as a fantastic collaborator. This is a guy who knows his way around drama—he understands the ins and outs of lurking tension, outright horror and character interactions, and knows when to place those elements

Here’s a few comparisons from my files:

Citizens of the Free Zone inspect flyers announcing the Open Meeting in Boulder in *The Stand: Hardcases 4*.



Larry and Leo walk along a suburban street in *Hardcases 4*, en route to Harold’s house.

within the narrative in order to pace the plot and accelerate the momentum.

From the offset—just as in Larry's escape from New York through the Lincoln Tunnel—I knew that the reality of the settings of this arc had to be spot on and, apart from one snafu (placing Fran and Stu in a house rather than an apartment—even though I took photos of their apartment—as seen below), I believe that's something I've been able to achieve through close observation of Boulder itself.

When I visited Boulder, Colorado, I took a multitude of photographs of the streets and homes in order to achieve some sort of authenticity to the adaptation. As I walked the neighborhoods, my mind was re-visiting the novel and ruminating about the varied and different houses corresponding to the individual characters. This is long before I'd reached the scenes in the adaptation, but some vistas pretty much drew themselves—from street scenes to vistas from Flagstaff Mountain.

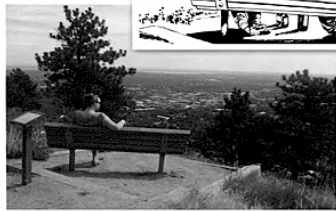
From *Hardcases 3*, sunrise over the Boulder Free Zone.



Evening on one of Boulder's commercial main streets, as seen in *Hardcases 3*.



After a night of drinking, Stu and Glen discuss
the future of Boulder in *Hardcases 2*.





Mother Abigail's house, as seen in *Hardcases 3*.



From *Hardcases 3*, Harold Lautner's house.





Stu and Frannie's house, seen in *Hardcases 3*, and the apartment they were supposed to live in, above right.

Stu and Larry sit on Larry's porch as Stu invites Larry to serve on the ad hoc committee in *Hardcases 4*.



Script to Final

PAGE ONE.

PANEL ONE.

At the top of the page, a cut-out of Mother Abigail's note, which reads: I MUST BE GONE A BIT NOW, I'VE SINNED AND PRESUMED TO KNOW THE MIND OF GOD. MY SIN HAS BEEN PRIDE, AND HE WANTS ME TO FIND MY PLACE IN HIS WORK AGAIN. I WILL BE WITH YOU AGAIN IF IT IS GOD'S WILL. ABBY FREEMANTLE. To the left of the note, so we read it before the note, the following caption:

CAPTION: By noon, news of Mother Abigail's disappearance—days before the Free Zone's first, all-important Town Hall Meeting—swept Boulder.

CAPTION: The community's collective sense was that she must've gone off to "pray for guidance." The general mood was more of unhappy resignation than alarm...

PANEL TWO.

SHIFT TO: An impromptu meeting at the Power Plant, where the guys (Stu, Glen, Nick, Ralph, and Harold) are gathered, standing in a huddle, in the middle of a hot discussion about Mother Abigail and what they should do next. **NOTE:** They had been working on getting the turbines going again, Mike, but were interrupted by Glen's arrival with Mother Abigail's note, which Glen is still holding. (Harold's off, on the right-hand side of this panel, a bit removed from the others, maybe sitting.) From left to right, I think we have Nick, Ralph, Stu, Glen, and then Harold.

CAPTION: ...except at the Power Plant, where efforts to get the juice flowing again were interrupted by Glen's arrival with Mother Abigail's note.

STU: We can't let an old woman wander the frigging wilderness like some Old Testament guy until she dies of exposure!

GLEN: Slow down, Stu. Let's try to look at the implications of this.

GLEN: If the Pope decides he has to walk to Jerusalem, do you argue with him if you're a good Catholic?

PANEL THREE.

Shifting the focus on to Stu (on the left) and Glen (on the right). Stu, glaring at Glen; maybe even pointing at him in an angry, accusing sort of way.

STU: To hell with the implications, Glen!

STU: It's not the same thing and you know it!

PANEL FOUR.

Shifting the focus to Ralph (on the left) and Stu (on the right). Stu vehemently agreeing with Ralph.

RALPH: It showers just about every afternoon... If she gets soaked, Mother's sure to take a cold. Then what? Pneumonia? At her age?

STU: Ralph's right; we have to—

STU: We have to pull together a search party—

STU: HOW FAR COULD SHE HAVE GOTTEN?

PANEL FIVE.

Shifting the focus on to Nick, who has written—and is holding up—a note for the group to read.

NICK'S NOTE: Even if you found her, how would you bring her back? Chains?

PANEL SIX.

A close-up on Stu's face. Filled with rage at this situation.

STU: Of course not! But we can't do nothing!



PAGE SEVEN.

PANEL ONE.

CUT TO: Later in the day, Harold (wearing a zippered Army surplus jacket) is sitting at a picnic area in a rest stop, near his parked bike. He had been enjoying a Coke and Slim Jims, but is now looking at—staring at—the walkie-talkie, which is hanging from his bike's handle bars, crackling with Ralph's voice.

FLOATING TEXT: LATER.

FLOATING TEXT: THE HUNT FOR MOTHER ABAGAIL.

CAPTION: Harold had asked for Nederland because it was the least likely area to find anything.

CAPTION: He didn't think he could walk from Boulder to Nederland in one day, let alone that crazy old bag.

RADIO: ...Sunrise Amphitheater... no sign of her... storm's coming up over here...

PANEL TWO.

Cutting to Stu, who is straddling his bike, talking into his walkie-talkie, which he's holding to his mouth. (This can be a close-up on Stu if you want, Mike.)

CAPTION: Ralph was way up on Flagstaff Mountain, but Stu was in Chautauqua Park, only about four miles from Harold.

STU: Ten-four, Ralph. Harold, you there? Calling Harold. You copy, Harold?

PANEL THREE.

Back to Harold, who is standing now—and who has taken up his walkie-talkie. He is talking into it, holding it with one hand, giving Stu the finger through the walkie-talkie with the other.

HAROLD: I'm here. I was off to the side... thought I saw something in a ditch, but it was just an old jacket, over.

PANEL FOUR.

Back to Stu, a variation on Panel Two, but pulling back so you see more of him. It's the end of the day; he's wrapping things up.

STU: Yeah, okay. Why don't you come down to Chautauqua, Harold, and we'll wait for Ralph together, copy?

PANEL FIVE.

Back to Harold. If possible, he's giving Stu the finger even more aggressively in this panel.

CAPTION: You like giving orders, don't you, suckhole? I might have something for you. Yes, I just might.

HAROLD: Sorry, Stu, I was woolgathering. I can be there in fifteen minutes. Over and out.



PAGE SIXTEEN.

PANEL ONE.

NOTE: This page is a flashback—Kojak's flashback, so it should have an almost otherworldly quality (like *Waterhip Down* or *We3* or something—and maybe it's a question of how this page is colored; anyway...) We're looking at Kojak, not yet messed-up, sniffing around the front porch of Kother Abagail's house in Nebraska. Trying to pick up Glen's scent again...

CAPTION: In fact, Kojak (who still thought of himself occasionally as Big Steve, which had been his original name) followed the scent of The Kan all the way to Hemmingford Home...

PANEL TWO.

Looking at the edge of the cornfield. And, as the caption tells us, four of Flagg's wolves are creeping out of the corn, snarling and vicious and scary. (We're looking at the wolves from Kojak's point-of-view).

CAPTION: ...where four wolves came out of the corn like ragged spirits of the dead and set upon him.

PANEL THREE.

Free reign here, Mike. A shot of the fight between Kojak and the four wolves. A couple of suggestions: One of the wolves could be swiping Kojak's side, digging in deeply, drawing blood, even as Kojak locks his jaws on one of the wolves' neck, breaking it viciously. (Note: Kojak looks as scary and threatening as the wolves in this panel; his bloodlust has been awoken...) A somewhat mythic panel, like out of *Clash of the Titans*.

CAPTION: The fight had been brutal.

CAPTION: (Indeed, even when Kojak was an old, old dog—and he would live another sixteen years, long after Glen Bateman died—the wounds he received that battle would ache and throb on wet days.)

PANEL FOUR.

CUTTING TO: Under the house, under the porch, where an extremely wounded, ragged Kojak has crawled, cowering in a corner, up against the house's foundation, turned to face any threat that might try to slip in under the porch after him. And this is the worse state we'll ever see Kojak, Mike. His ear torn, his wounds bleeding, side gouged, etc... And, most importantly, terrified of something in the corn that's not a wolf.

CAPTION: Kojak killed two of the wolves and sent the other two scurrying away...

CAPTION: ...before crawling under the porch to hide from an unseen thing that felt like a Kan and a Wolf and an Eye, a dark thing like an ancient crocodile in the corn

PANEL FIVE.

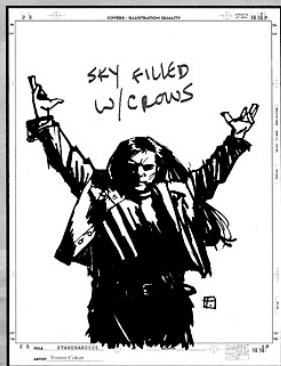
The last flashback in this sequence. And if the rest of these panels were set at, say, dusk; this panel is set in early morning. And Kojak, banged-up and rough-looking (but rested, at least) has limped out from beneath the porch and has cocked (is cocking) his head to one side, towards the west, towards Colorado...

CAPTION: Some unknown time later, Kojak emerged from beneath the porch, sure of where to go.

CAPTION: And it was not The Kan's scent guiding him, it was a Dream to the west of him. Of him chasing rabbits through clover that was wet with soothing dew...



Tomm Coker's Cover Sketches for Issue 5 of **HARDCASES**



*Next: "Nadine, Nadine, how I love Nadine to be my love,
to be my queen, Nadine..."*



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